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This article examines the unique spiritual journey of the counselor in relation to her attempts to aid clients through their wildernesses. Both the therapist and the client journey to a common end. However, it is the manner in which the counselor travels that allows her to discover her own destiny while assisting clients to realize their unique potential. Specific considerations discussed are counselor preparation for spiritual intervention, the nature and the utilization of the "wilderness experience" in counseling, and the implications of spiritual growth within the healing relationship. Particular attention is given to the stages of spiritual development, the wilderness journey, and those factors which contrast a productive, growth-inducing experience with an aimless wandering in an existential void. Contains 24 references. (Author)

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Coming Home:
The Utilization of the "Wilderness Experience" in Counseling

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This article examines the unique spiritual journey of the counselor in relation to her attempts to aid clients through their wildernesses. Both the therapist and the client journey to a common end. However, it is the manner in which the counselor travels that allows her to discover her own destiny while assisting clients to realize their unique potential. Specific considerations discussed are counselor preparation for spiritual intervention, the nature and the utilization of the "wilderness experience" in counseling, and the implications of spiritual growth within the healing relationship. Particular attention is given to the stages of spiritual development, the wilderness journey, and those factors which contrast a productive, growth-inducing experience with an aimless wandering in an existential void.

Coming Home:
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"Once there lived a village of creatures along the bottom of a great crystal river. The current of the river swept silently over them all - young and old, rich and poor, good and evil, the current going its own way, knowing only its own crystal self. Each creature in its own manner clung tightly to the twigs and rocks of the river bottom, for clinging was their way of life, and resisting the current what each had learned from birth.

But one creature said at last, `I am tired of clinging. Though I cannot see it with my eyes, I trust that the current knows where it is going. I shall let go, and let it take me where it will. Clinging, I shall die of boredom. The other creatures laughed and said, Fool! Let go, and that current you worship will throw you tumbled and smashed across the rocks, and you will die quicker than of boredom!'

But the one heeded them not, and taking a breath did let go, and at once was tumbled and smashed by the current across the rocks. Yet in time, as the creature refused to cling again, the current lifted him free from the bottom, and he was bruised and hurt no more.

And the creatures downstream, to whom he was a stranger, cried, `See a miracle! A creature like ourselves, yet he flies! See the Messiah, come to save us all!' And the one carried in the current said, `I am no more Messiah than you. The river delights to lift us free, if only we dare let go. Our true work is this voyage, this adventure. But they cried the more, `Saviour!' all the while clinging to the rocks, and when they looked again he was gone, and they were left alone making legends of a Saviour".

Richard Bach (1977)

As counselors, many of us feel an affinity for the little creature who had the courage to turn loose of common, more traditional ways of thinking and behaving to seek that which is higher. Secretly, most of us also long to be viewed by our clients and others as transcendent. We hope that as professionally-trained counselors we have developed not only therapeutic

technique, but also some measure of transcendent "wisdom" that can lift our clients from their rigid, clinging perspective to a courageous, open, self-actualizing lifestyle. This wish is rarely realized, however, as the topic of "spirituality" in most counselor training programs is seldom addressed. In fact, spirituality is many times eschewed. This is especially surprizing in light of the fact that the human spirit has long been regarded by many prominent counseling theorists as a central part of the self. Theorists such as Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Victor Frankl realized the axiomatic position of spirituality within the self and based many of the most central features of their theories in this area.

COUNSELOR PREPARATION FOR SPIRITUAL INTERVENTION

In light of this theoretical focus on the human spirit, it appears paradoxical that little time is expended in counselor preparation programs preparing the aspiring counselor for "spirit-oriented" intervention. Several possible explanations exist. Specific rationale as to why counselors may experience confusion and concern when attempting "spirit-work" include: 1) counselors fear imposing values on their clients, 2) counselors view the spirit as unscientific and nebulous, and 3) personal ambiguity regarding spirituality

results in counselor reluctance to introduce the issue into therapy.

Traditionally, democratic societies have valued the separation of church and state and have established a rather firm boundary between the religious and the secular. Similarly, professional counseling has consistently distinguished itself from religious counseling. Some may feel that to address the spirit is to compromise the boundaries between these two philosophies. Paul Tillich (1951) in his Systematic Theology, makes a helpful distinction between religion and spirituality. In this work, Tillich states that although compatible in many cases, religion and spirituality are opposites. Religion, according to Tillich, is a holding on to - an espousing of a certain set of dogma or beliefs. In contrast, spirituality is defined as a releasing of all supposition, and thereby becoming open to a relationship with "that which is greater than self". In other words, religion is a holding on while spirituality is a letting go. In Stephen Mitchell's (1991) translation of the Tao Te Ching, the following statement is made, *"When they lose their sense of awe, people turn to religion. When they no longer trust themselves, they begin to depend upon authority"*. If one accepts this model, the quest for spirituality becomes remarkably similar to traditional goals of counseling (i.e. self-efficacy, autonomy, and internal locus).

TRADITIONAL THEORETICAL APPROACHES

As stated earlier, this reluctance to focus on the human spirit is especially paradoxical in light of the prominence of the concept of spirituality in the writings of the classic theorists. The first theorist to focus on spirituality was C.G.Jung as early as 1913. In fact, Jung's commitment to the axiomatic position of spirituality within the human psyche was a major catalyst in his departure from Freud's Psychoanalytic approach. This theoretical dispute led not only to Jung's development of the Analytical approach, but also to the loss of his mentor. After Jung's break with Sigmund Freud in 1913, Jung weathered a difficult wilderness period until 1917. Jung (1963) described this period as one of "inner uncertainty and disorientation". Rychlak (1973) comments that Jung felt he was "being assaulted by fantasies from his unconscious". Jung (1969) came to believe that the individual who ignores the spiritual side of man violates the principle of entropy. Entropy is the process whereby the psyche seeks psychological equilibrium or balance. Ryckman (1993) states that "one-sided development creates conflict, tension, and strain, whereas a more even distribution produces a more fully mature person". As a result of this imbalance, Jung (1964) argued that one who neglects the spiritual will experience personal difficulties. Human beings must access the spiritual if they are to understand themselves.

Similarly, Abraham Maslow contended that spiritual growth was quintessential to healthy adult development. Maslow coined the term "self-actualizing" to describe these highly developed individuals in his hierarchy of needs theory (See Figure 1).

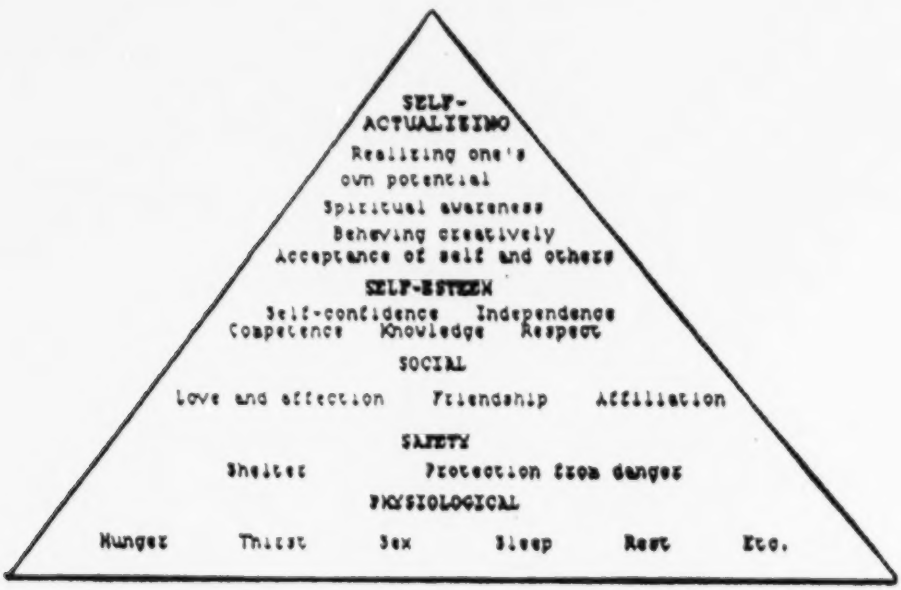

Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow postulated that individuals move from the most basic needs to higher level needs through meeting those needs in succession. His fundamental assumption was that individuals are basically good and can achieve their potential or actualize.

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> *When any of these needs is not fulfilled the person becomes sick. Just as we need adequate amounts of vitamin C to remain healthy, so we need love from others in sufficient quantities to function properly. In order to move toward self-actualization, we must have sufficiently gratified our basic needs, so that we are free to pursue fulfillment of the higher, transcending, meta needs* (Maslow, 1962).

According to Maslow, the self-actualizing individual is one that develops high levels of spiritual awareness and creates for himself a supportive and facilitative environment. Maslow stated that self-actualizing individuals love, are loved by others, enjoy high self-esteem, and are accomplished in their work. On a fundamental level, Maslow's self-actualizing individual is much like Jung's concept of spiritual awareness.

Another humanistic theorist noted for his contribution to the spiritual aspect of the human potential movement was Carl Rogers. Carl Rogers (1961) believed that the goal an individual wishes to achieve, through conscious and unconscious means, "is to become himself". Rogers postulated that the counselor should attempt to create an atmosphere of freedom whereby the client can learn self-direction and autonomy. It is this freedom that allows the person to drop the facades, the masks, and the roles, hence, therefore to become one's own self-validating person.

> *"The individual drops one after another of the defensive masks with which he has faced life; that he experiences fully the hidden aspects of himself; that he discovers in these experiences the stranger who has been living behind these masks, the stranger who is himself"* (Rogers 1961).

Rogers postulated a higher form of consciousness known as the "fully-functioning" person. The fully-functioning person is one who lives in accordance to their own values, rather than external conditions of worth. Thus, defenses of denial and distortion are no longer necessary in their lives. They are free to explore, without preconception, the total self. The fully-functioning person will have the following six characteristics: (1) "They will be open to experience; (2) Their self-structures will be congruent; (3) They will perceive themselves as the locus of evaluation of their experiences; (4) They will experience unconditional self-regard; (5) They will meet each situation with behavior that is a unique and creative adaptation to the newness of that moment; (6) They will live in harmony with others because of the rewarding nature of the reciprocal unconditional positive regard" (Rogers, 1959). The fully-functioning person has much in common with Maslow's self-actualizing person and Jung's concept of spiritual awareness.

Victor Frankl's Logotherapy (1946) points, in a graphic fashion, to the existential void or stagnation associated with a failure to attend to the needs of the human spirit. Through his confinement in a Natzi concentration camp, Frankl discovered that individuals survived only if they had meaning for their lives - if they were connected to something bigger than self. Logotherapy points out that *"Life does not owe us happiness, it offers us meaning. It offers us the opportunity to do something*

meaningful with our lives. If we pursue happiness, we will never find it. Happiness comes only as a by-product of having done something meaningful with our lives" (Barnes, 1993). It is not the load that breaks us down, but the way we carry it. The aims of Logotherapy are to help us to become aware of our spiritual being and to make conscious those resources which are often repressed, frustrated, or ignored. It teaches us to use our "defiant power of the human spirit", to stand up against adversity, and it strengthens our spiritual potential for the crises that await us in life. Jung, Rogers, Maslow, and Frankl are representative of the major theorists who view spirituality as an axiomatic feature in the mature personality. It should be noted, however, that Erik Erickson, Rollo May, Alfred Adler, and others share this conviction. In light of this focus, consider the impact of spirituality on the counselor's personal growth, as well as that of his clients.

THE NATURE OF THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

In light of the fact that most counselor preparation programs provide little training in "spirit work", the counselor may note a deficient knowledge base in this area. Due to this lack of focus, the wholistic counselor must take the responsibility for her own spiritual growth, as well as developing skills which may allow her to access the spiritual side of the client. In accessing the

spiritual, several issues merit discussion. The first is the need for personal growth on the part of the counselor. The pursuit of spiritual growth is a nebulous, confusing task which requires considerable courage. However, like the small creature clinging to the bottom of the river, the spiritually-oriented counselor must make a conscious decision to let go, all the while knowing full well that many bumps and bruises await. Gandhi (1991) said of the spiritual quest, "Better not to start - but once started better finish". It can be incredibly uncomfortable to find one's self having abandoned traditional viewpoints without yet acquiring the spiritual discipline to live out one's new found philosophy. One feels lost in the wilderness, homeless, and seemingly alone. It is usually much later when one realizes that the wilderness experience from which one has been fleeing is in reality the only salvation. Or in the words of Jesus, *"If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for me, you will save it"* (Matthew 10:39, Living Bible). Also, written in the Tao, *"If you want to be reborn, let yourself die. If you want to be given everything, give everything up."* Likewise, Ram Dass (1993) in speaking of surrender of self to the wilderness experience stated, *"I spent the first forty years of my life trying to be somebody. I've spent the last twenty years learning to be nobody."* Carl Jung advocates personal growth as a primary means of helping others. According to Jung

(1988), *"No one can help another person go further than one has gone oneself"*. We will be unable to most effectively assist our clients in their journeys until we accept our own spiritual growth as quintessential for our preparation as counselors. Again, Ram Dass (1973) in speaking of his spiritual journey, *"My only job for the sake of all humanity is to become all I am capable of becoming"*.

Equally significant is a second consideration - the creation of a "sacred space" for clients. Throughout history places of healing have been regarded as sacred. Counselors can provide a sacred space on two levels: physical and metaphorical. Counselors provide a setting where it is safe for clients to explore more delicate and tender parts of the self; a supportive and comfortable place of unconditional acceptance. At a deeper level, however, through a spiritual connectedness the relationship between the counselor and the client becomes sacred. The counselor <u>becomes</u> that sacred space for the client. In this case, the healing occurs not from what the counselor does, but from who she is. According to Jeffrey Kottler (1993), *"The force and spirit of who the therapist is as a human being most dramatically stimulates change. Lock a person, any person in a room alone with Sigmund Freud, Carl Rogers, Fritz Perls, Albert Ellis, or any other formidable personality, and in several hours he will come out different. It is not what the therapist does that is important - whether she*

interprets, reflects, confronts, or role plays - but rather who she is. A therapist who is vibrant, inspirational, charismatic; who is sincere, loving, and nurturing; who is wise, confident, and self-disciplined will have a dramatic impact through the sheer force and power of her essence, regardless of her theoretical allegiances". The encounter with a higher spirit is a powerful and healing experience.

The third consideration is the mechanism by which growth occurs both in the counselor and the client. This involves the utilization of what was earlier termed the "wilderness experience". The wilderness experience is common to all mankind. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the wilderness was used literally to present a time of challenge which was meant to transform. During a time of temptation, Jesus was led to the wilderness to "meet Satan" in order to fortify his courage. It was through this time in the wilderness that he realized who he was, his purpose, and his destiny. The Old Testament prophets are classic examples of individuals who through their trials in the wilderness returned to point people toward God. Indeed, the forty years of wandering in the desert after the Jewish exodus from Egypt is a prime example of the utilization of the wilderness experience to reframe the spirituality of an entire nation. *"Who brought us up out of Egypt and led us through the barren wilderness, through a*

land of deserts and rifts, a land of drought and darkness, a land where no one travels and no one lives? I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce" (Jeremiah 2:6-7, NIV). All individuals must spend their time in the wilderness. *"We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us"* (Marcel Proust, 1990, Life 101). Sadly, due to a lack of understanding of the wilderness experience, many individuals squander this opportunity for growth with the end result of useless suffering. By contrast, the "wilderness experience" that leads to personal growth is a heroic journey. *"Most heroic journeys involve going through a dark place - through mountain caverns, through under-world, or labrinthine passages to emerge, finally, into the light"* (Bolen, 1979). Generally we think of the "wilderness experience" as those discreet periods of time when we are ultimately challenged and our existence threatened. While these are examples of a "wilderness experience", they encompass only one level of the experience. The wilderness experience is multi-level and overlapping. Short-term experiences are super-imposed over more life-shaping longitudinal journeys.

THE UTILIZATION OF THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

There are several factors that are involved in the utilization of a wilderness experience. The first is the realization of the archetypal nature of the wilderness. Joseph Campbell (1973), through his investigation of folk culture and mythology, has clearly documented the image of the "woods" or wilderness to symbolize a time of transition from one level of awareness to a higher, more enlightened view. It is in the wilderness where one confronts the most frightening image of all - the undiscovered self. Jung (1958) stated that there is nothing more frightening than confronting the denied parts of self. The shadow, to use Jung's terminology, represents not only those previously unacknowledged and unaccepted parts of the self, but also unparalleled opportunities for the development of self awareness. An ancient Chinese proverb states that *"When the student is ready the teacher will come"*. The wilderness experience is the ultimate teacher. Not only does one meet the self in the form of shadow, one also has the opportunity to become acquainted with many facets of one's multidimensional persona. Only after having encountered one's trickster, magician, wise old man/woman, shaman, God within, and other archetypes, can one truly appreciate the richness of the journey. Many times the journey will take the form of the hero's quest. This archetypal tale has been

presented in every time and setting from "Adam and Eve" to "Star Wars" and each time with the same message. Essentially, the young naive fool is living in an uninformed and sheltered bliss. This utopia is shattered by an impending calamity or threat. The neophyte must leave the comfort and security of his/her utopia and journey into an unknown land where many dangers await. Due to the nave's ignorance about reality, she is fooled, tricked, and manipulated, by those encountered. Ultimately, the supreme challenge must be faced. Without Divine intervention all will be lost. At the last opportune moment the supernatural intervenes in the form of a magic sword, a golden fleece, a ruby slipper, a wise sage, or etc. With the intervention of the Divine, that which was humanly impossible, becomes a spiritual reality. The challenge is met, the dragon is slain, and the protagonist returns home as a wise, enlightened, conquering hero. The hero is now equipped, not only to lead a transcendent lifestyle, but also to guide others through their journey.

All archetypal journeys are rich with meaning. The second factor involved in the productive utilization of the wilderness experience is the ability to conceptualize this purpose. "Wilderness experiences" are intended for our learning; to assist us in revising our preconceptions regarding life and our place in the universe. A "wilderness experience" consistently challenges us to extend

our self-imposed limitations and redefine our purpose. According to Jung (1964), *"A human being would certainly not grow to seventy or eighty years old if this longevity had no meaning for the species to which he belongs"*. As we mature, the "wilderness experience" teaches specific lessons. Ultimately however, our journey culminates in a higher level of spiritual consciousness. Spiritual growth, as discussed here, could be divided into four (4) stages:

Stage 1: Unconscious Incompetence
Stage 2: Conscious Incompetence
Stage 3: Conscious Competence
Stage 4: Unconscious Competence

Stage 1, Unconscious Incompetence, is characterized by a seemingly complete naivete and a profound lack of awareness. In Bach's parable (1977) at the beginning of this article, Stage 1 is found in the habitual, mindless behavior of the creatures along the bottom of the "great crystal river". Not only did the creatures not know, they did not know that they did not know. The creatures conception of themselves and their world was extremely limited. Life was a burden, an effort; something to be endured. Every day was filled with struggle, trouble, and a desperate need to control that which was beyond their reach. Need reduction and competition were their motivators. Maslow (1943) conceptualized this basic stage in his first two (2) levels in the hierarchy of needs

theory as Physiological needs and Safety needs, (See Figure 1). At these levels the individual is egocentric and focused upon mere survival. As represented in Figure 2, individuals at Stage 1 see little need for change or growth. All struggles are viewed as external and are attributed to deficiencies in the world and others. Cognitive duality is noted in the need to project, blame, assign value, and label both people and events (e.g. good vs. bad, pretty vs. ugly, smart vs. stupid, etc.).

NOTE: *The "Wilderness Experience" occurs in Stages 2 and 3.*

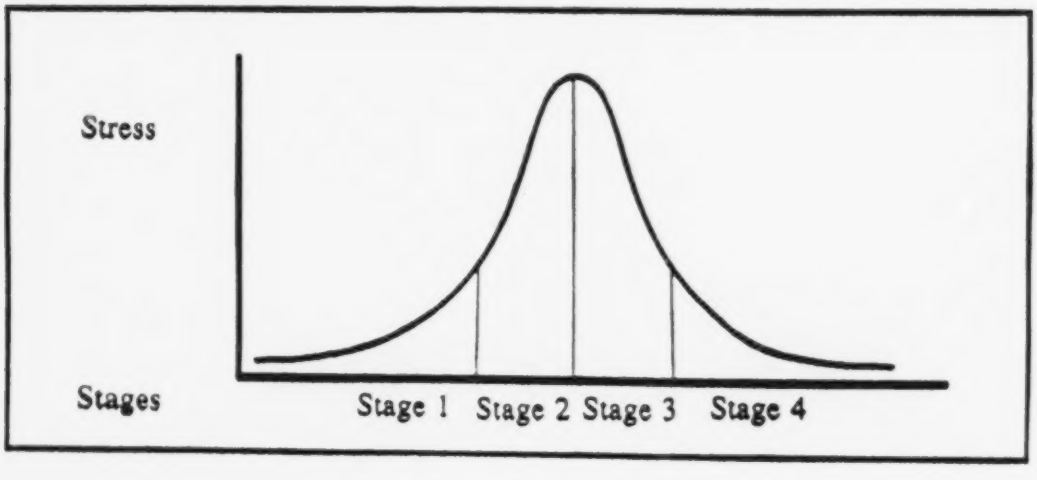

Figure 2. Stress levels by Stage

Stage 2, Conscious Incompetence, is best described as a period of spiritual awakening. Bach presents the image of one insightful little creature who realizes the futility and boredom of his current existence. Individuals in Stage 2 have begun to question at least some of the basic concepts typically held about life. "What is my purpose?" "Why am I really here?" "Why do things in my life happen as they do?" "Who am I really?" "Is there a God? and if so, what is my connection to God?" These existential issues and the resulting ontological anxiety serves as a catalyst for further seeking and exacerbates the perceived need for growth (see Figure 2). Maslow most closely described individuals in this stage in his Love and Belonging level (see Figure 1). At this level, individuals are beginning the transition from strictly materialistic, egocentric needs, to a focus upon sharing one's self with others. Perceiving this need for others may well be the first step to understanding "the larger self". It should also be noted that although the entire growth process is one of moving from an extrinsic to a more intrinsic locus of control and evaluation, Stage 2 is a point at which self-efficacy first begins to emerge. It can also be noted that Stage 2 is characterized by its focus on cognition. The individual in Stage 2 thinks, but does not act. The development of awareness is a cognitive process. At the point that insight leads to behavior (i.e. the awareness leads to lifestyle

changes), Stage 2 is terminated and Stage 3 is initiated.

Stage 3, Conscious Competence, is characterized by a striving to operationalize one's vision. Stage 3 is highly teleological in that one has developed a vision of the spiritual self. At this stage, Levinson's (1978) concept of "the dream" becomes most axiomatic. The individual's spiritual development becomes goal-directed and conformity is no longer to "the values of the common man", but to the vision of self as observed in the lives of spiritual role models. Due to one's self-assessed imperfections in comparison to one's models, this stage is also marked by a high perceived need for growth (see Figure 2). Although the individual is becoming more intrinsic and self-validating, this inter-directedness is still rather fragile and somewhat embryonic. As such, this stage is considered one of spiritual practice. During Stage 3, the wilderness quest becomes a reality. In the Bach parable, Stage 3 is realized in the dynamic and courageous release of the twig. This action by the intrepid little being marks a point at which life is irreversibly altered. Once the twig is released and there is submission to the current, one may never grasp the twig again. Stage 3 is therefore a point of no return requiring tremendous faith. A hallmark of this "leap of faith" is the inability to see where one will land. Ryckman (1993) stated that "growth without pain is impossible". At no point during the journey

is this more poignant than at Stage 3. It should be noted that once "the being" released the twig, routine and boredom were a thing of the past. These were replaced by bumps, bruises, and trauma. The key to eventual transcendence was the being's stubborn refusal to grab for familiar security. Maslow described this inner-strength and determination in his hierarchy of needs as the Self-Esteem level (see Figure 1). The characteristics of this level include: self confidence, independence, competence, knowledge, and respect. Stage 3 faith requires extraordinary trust not only in self, but in a loving universe. Individuals at this stage, therefore, have developed a connectedness to their inner-shadow, an unconditional acceptance of others, and a communion to that which is sacred. Rollo May (1992) described these individuals as imaginative and courageous as they set out moment to moment to create themselves.

Stage 4, Unconscious Competence, is rather difficult to qualify. This stage attempts to represent one's fullest account of the cosmos and her unique place in it. The hallmark of Stage 4 is total submission to that which is. According to the Tao,

> "Men are born soft and supple;
> dead, they are stiff and hard.
> Plants are born tender and pliant;
> dead, they are brittle and dry.
>
> Thus, whoever is stiff and inflexible

is a disciple of death.
Whoever is soft and yielding
is a disciple of life.

The hard and stiff will be broken.
The soft and supple will prevail" (Tao, 76).

This stage is also characterized by a movement toward individual freedom. As stated by Ram Dass (1993), *"If I am to serve mankind, I must become totally free"*. Only by becoming free can we be released from the fears and insecurities that restrict us. Individuals at Stage 4 have learned the power of surrender of will. Only by becoming "nobody" can we be freed to realize our destiny. Again from the Tao:

Nothing in the world
is as soft and yielding as water.
Yet for dissolving the hard and inflexible,
nothing can surpass it.

The soft overcomes the hard;
the gentle overcomes the rigid.
Everyone knows this is true
but few can put it into practice (Tao, 78).

At Stage 4, the perceived need for growth becomes irrelevant (see Figure 2). *"I am as I am - as I was created"*, or to resurrect an overused phrase from Thomas Harris (1973), "I am O.K. and you are O.K."- because that is what is. In Bach's parable, the being enters Stage 4 when it learns it can fly through no

effort or virtue of it's own but through the divine love of the crystal life force. It's only purpose is to live this gift with joy and thanksgiving. What is of special interest to us as counselors is the effect that Stage 4 has on others spiritually. In Bach's parable, the "lower beings" were in awe of the being that surrendered to the current; "a being like us and yet he flies." They were so mesmerized by this transcendence that they felt they had encountered the Messiah - the great healer. Healing is an inevitable outcome when one's spiritual development is such that he/she can transcend self. Maslow (1968) describes the stagnation of spirit which can occur in those individuals unable to transcend self. "Without the transcendent and the transpersonal, we get sick, violent, and nihilistic, or else hopeless and apathetic. We need something `bigger than we are' to be awed by and to commit ourselves to in a new naturalistic, empirical, nonchurchy sense" (p. iii-iv). Stage 4 can be compared to Maslow's Self-Actualizing level. This level is characterized by what Maslow called B-cognition and B-love. Self-Actualizing individuals are free to explore their own potential, behave creatively, continue self-development and growth, and develop a greater acceptance of self and others. Adoption of this lifestyle leads to what has been termed the "second naivete" in which one returns full circle to that from which one came. This is the great paradox; the coming

home. Just as the conquering hero returns to the kingdom after having slain the dragon and retrieved the golden fleece, so the Stage 4 journeyer returns to the everyday world. And, as the hero returns with the golden fleece, so too the spiritual journeyer returns with a transcendent spirit.

THE NATURE OF THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Carl Jung described this circular nature of the spiritual journey through his stages of human development. Jung's lifespan theory has four (4) developmental stages: (1) childhood, (2) youth, (3) maturity, and (4) old age. The goal of childhood, according to Jung is to move from the unconscious world into the physical world. In the youth stage, the goal is to acquire material possessions in the physical world. Next, is the midlife crisis, or the "Noon of Life". According to Jung, the culmination of the focus on the material leads to a spiritual void; an existential vacuum. The young adult has not incorporated the most important facet of the self, the spiritual. As a result, he enters midlife with many possessions but no inner peace. As stated in an ancient eastern saying, *"what is real cannot be shaken, what is unreal does not exist. Therein lies the peace of God."* Without the "real", the individual at midlife may be empty, confused, and bitter. The goals of youth are not satisfying for the person

entering maturity, and the lack of higher goals or dreams can result in crisis. At the midlife stage, in order to restore homeostasis and balance, the individual will seek the non-materialistic/spiritual values previously neglected. According to Jung (1955), the midlife crisis leads many individuals to the wilderness in search of their soul.

The values of the midlife individual have turned from the physical, (i.e. making money and acquiring material possessions), to personal attributes such as mastery of craftsmanship, a search for wisdom, tenderness in relationships, and spiritual growth. Development of these attributes will be more difficult than the task of acquiring material possessions which occupied their youth. Jung believed that each individual comes from the spiritual or collective unconscious and in the second half of life begins the journey back to the spiritual (see Figure 3). An important distinction to be noted is the circular nature of the spiritual journey. This cycle is in direct opposition to a strictly physical view of life which can best be represented through a bell curve/normal distribution (i.e. we are born, grow through midlife, then begin a steady decline which culminates in death).

As would be expected, the distribution of individuals throughout each of the four spiritual stages discussed earlier would be markedly uneven. To quote

the writers of Star Trek: The Next Generation, *"The higher - the fewer"*. It can be postulated that a grouping by stage could be represented as a positively skewed distribution (see figure 4).

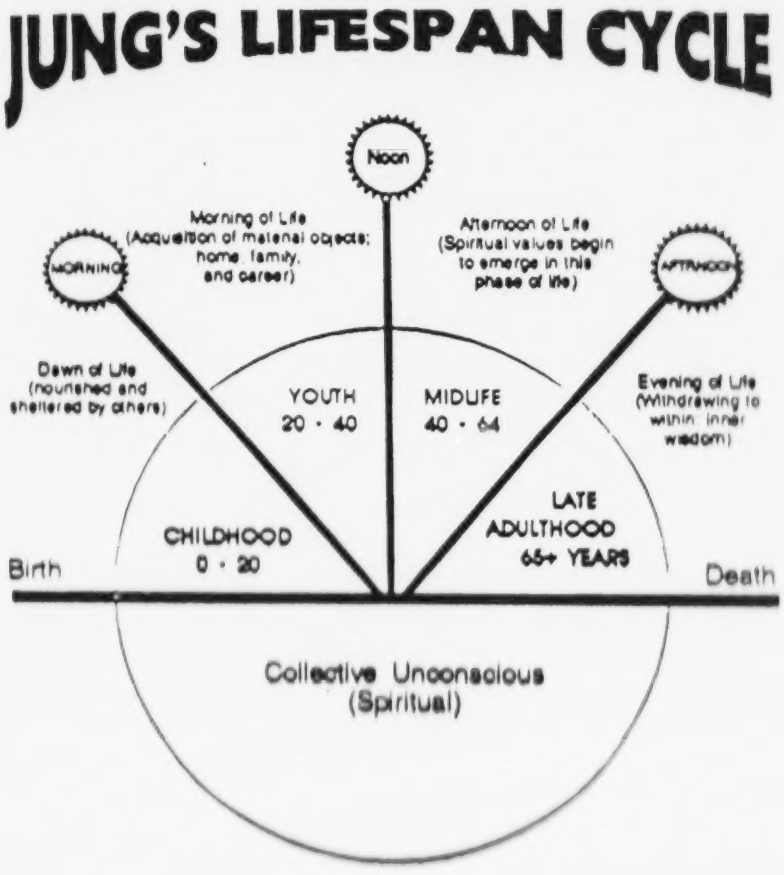

Figure 3. Jungian Lifespan Cycle Chart

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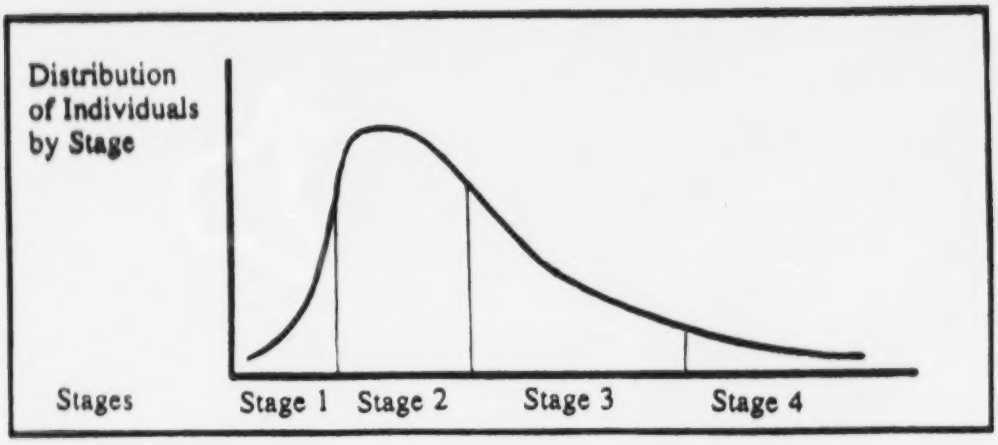

Figure 4. Distribution of Individuals by Stage

It should also be noted that these stages, as conceptualized herein, are neither discrete nor static. In other words, an individual may "regress" or move to what would be considered a lower/earlier stage due to environmental stressors, developmental transitions, or other variables. Also, it would be extremely rare to find an individual who functions purely within one specific stage at any given time. More typically, individuals would be viewed as having an identifiable stage that represents their primary and preferred ways of relating to themselves, others, and the transcendent.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING

In summary, three primary issues relating to the pragmatic application of the wilderness experience appear cogent.

1) If clients are to develop spiritual awareness, the therapist must serve as a guide. To put it more directly, we can not lead others where we have never been. This principle forces counselors to seriously address their own spiritual growth - not only as a personal obligation, but also as a professional imperative.

2) If clients are to develop spiritual awareness, we must teach clients about the journey and its purpose in their lives. Only as clients learn to "reframe" their wilderness experience can they hope to access it's transforming power. Through the utilization of their own life story, archetypal myth, and parables, clients learn to adopt a transcendent, expanded perspective. This vision, in turn, renders the client capable of accessing greater levels of awareness, acceptance, and personal peace.

3) If clients are to develop spiritual awareness, the therapist must teach "the great healing principle": *Use everything for your learning and growth.* When daily events, however unpleasant or elusive, can be seen as a curriculum for growth, clients levels of resistance and anger can be significantly reduced and their spiritual growth maximized.

Spiritual growth is an area which is still embryonic. Indeed, many counselors are true spiritual neophytes who consider spiritual issues the exclusive domain of TV evangelists and psychics. As a result, clients are deprived of the tremendous wealth of insight and potential for life-changing

awareness available to those who will but see. Richard Bach provides a test to find out whether our mission on earth is finished. According to Bach, *"If you are alive, it isn't"*. May we as counselors be disciples of life who teach our clients to embrace the joy of living.

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